

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

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SUBJECT: VISIT TO VENTSPILS OIL TRANSSHIPMENT INSTALLATION

1. CONGEN OFFICERS VISITED "FRIENDSHIP" PIPELINE OIL
TRANSSHIPMENT INSTALLATION IN VENTSPILS, LATVIA, ON FEBRUARY 5.
THIS MESSAGE SUMMARIZES MAIN OBSERVATIONS OBTAINED FROM TALK
WITH INSTALLATION DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTED TOUR OF AREA.

2. THE OIL TRANSSHIPMENT INSTALLATION IN VENTSPILS IS A TERMINAL
OF THE "FRIENDSHIP" PIPELINE WHICH RECEIVES PETROLEUM AND OIL
PRODUCTS, RESPECTIVELY, THROUGH TWO LINES. THE INSTALLATION
COVERS AN AREA OF 120 HECTARES AND HAS A TOTAL STORAGE
CAPACITY OF 700,000 TONS OF PETROLEUM AND OIL IN TANK FIELDS
WHICH CONTAIN 20,000 TON CAPACITY RESERVOIRS. THE RESERVOIRS
ARE LAID OUT IN TANDEM WITH PUMPING STATIONS WHICH CONVEY THE
FUELS TO TANKER VESSELS AT THE OIL LOADING SEGMENT OF THE
VENTSPILS PORT, LOCATED SOME FOUR AND ONE-HALF KILOMETERS FROM
THE INSTALLATION ITSELF.

3. THE INSTALLATION HAS EXPANDED SINCE THE RESPECTIVE SEGMENTS
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OF THE PIPELINE WERE COMPLETED IN 1958 AND 1962. HOWEVER, THE
INSTALLATION DIRECTOR CLAIMED THAT THE PRESENT INFRASTRUCTURE

LOCATION WOULD MAKE IT VERY DIFFICULT TO EXPAND WITHOUT DISRUPTING EXISTING OPERATIONS. THE INSTALLATION PRESENTLY HANDLES SOME 18 MILLION TONS OF PETROLEUM AND OIL ANNUALLY, REPORTEDLY THE SECOND LARGEST SUCH FACILITY NEXT TO NOVOROSIYSK. THE DIRECTOR ACKNOWLEDGED THAT VENTSPILS "COULD BE" A TRANSSHIPMENT POINT FOR OIL AND PETROLEUM EXPORTS TO THE UNITED STATES IF SUCH AN AGREEMENT WERE CONCLUDED, BUT IT WAS HIS OPINION THAT NOVOROSIYSK AND NAKHODKA WOULD PLAY THE MAJOR ROLES. OIL AND PETROLEUM EXPORTS THROUGH VENTSPILS NOW GO ALMOST ENTIRELY TO EUROPEAN CUSTOMERS, AS WELL AS CUBA.

4. THE INSTALLATION EMPLOYS 700 WORKERS. THE DIRECTOR CONSIDERS LABOR SHORTAGE HIS NUMBER ONE PROBLEM SINCE THE INSTALLATION MUST "COMPETE" WITH THE ADJOINING PORT AND NEW PROJECTS UNDER CONSTRUCTION IN OBTAINING A LABOR FORCE. THE VENTSPILS POPULATION OF 48,000 IS OBVIOUSLY INADEQUATE TO PROVIDE LABOR RESOURCES FOR SIGNIFICANT EXPANSION OF EXISTING AND NEW INSTALLATIONS AND, AS ELSEWHERE IN THE SOVIET UNION, HOUSING CONSTRUCTION CONSTANTLY LAGS BEHIND SCHEDULE AND EFFECTIVELY INHIBITS LABOR IMPORTATION, ALSO IN SHORT SUPPLY DUE TO COMPETITION ELSEWHERE IN THE SOVIET UNION.

5. COMPUTERIZED CONTROL SYSTEMS FOR THE PUMPING FACILITIES ARE OF MIXED EAST GERMAN AND WEST GERMAN MANUFACTURE. THE EAST GERMAN CONTROL BOARDS HAVE JUST BEEN INSTALLED, BUT ARE ALREADY INADEQUATE TO HANDLE THE EXISTING LEVEL OF OPERATIONS, NOT TO MENTION ANY EXPANSION. THE DIRECTOR SAID THAT THE EAST GERMAN MANUFACTURER OF THE CONTROL PANELS HAD REFUSED TO ACCEPT AN ADDITIONAL ORDER FROM THE INSTALLATION DUE TO A BACKLOG OF ORDERS. FOR OBVIOUS REASONS OF EQUIPMENT COMPATABILITY, THE INSTALLATION IS LOATHE TO SEEK OTHER SUPPLIERS. THE WEST GERMAN EQUIPMENT IS NOT YET FUNCTIONING SINCE, THE DIRECTOR SAID, IT HAS DEVELOPED PROBLEMS WHICH WILL REQUIRE WEST GERMAN TECHNICIANS TO RESOLVE BEFORE IT CAN BE PUT INTO EXPLOITATION.

6. THE INSTALLATION PRESENTLY RECEIVES 75 O/O OF ITS OIL AND PETROLEUM FROM THE FRIENDSHIP PIPELINE TERMINALS AND THE REMAINING 25 O/O BY RAIL TANKER CARS. SINCE THE PIPELINE APPEARS TO BE WORKING AT NEAR CAPACITY, IT APPEARS THAT ANY
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EXPANSION IN TOTAL OPERATING CAPACITY OF THE INSTALLATION WOULD HAVE TO COME, AT LEAST INITIALLY, FROM INCREASED RAIL DELIVERIES. THE DIRECTOR INDICATED THAT THERE ARE NO IMMEDIATE PLANS FOR EXPANSION OF THE PIPELINE SYSTEM, ALTHOUGH THERE WERE PROJECTS ON THE DRAWING BOARDS.
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